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ABSTRACT

This book delineates the effects of the Great Depression upon the schools and explores how the supporters of public education responded to the retrenchment of school budgets. The introduction postulates that the public schools as a bureaucratic system in the best of times produced what it was capable of producing, which at times coincided with the wishes of parents and the community. In the worst of times the institution muddled through. Chapters 1 and 2 describe how educators failed to come forward with a new paradigm for the schools. The chapters also analyze the contents of the "Social Frontier," a journal founded by educators. The third chapter recounts the Depression's depths as hard times rocked the U.S. schools. Chapter 4 focuses on the reorganization of schools in New York City and concludes with a review of the "McCarthyite" tactics of the chief medical officer of the schools, Dr. Emil Altman, in removing "insane" teachers. The fifth chapter describes the impact of the Depression on Seattle, Washington, schools. Chapter 6 describes the Tusher affair, a case study of school bureaucratic responses to parental wishes to have their children attend their neighborhood schools. The chapter concludes with a look at parental and student complaints of the schools elsewhere, including those by the Pennsylvania Amish. Chapter 7 describes the historical albatross under which teachers have labored since the father of the public schools, Horace Mann, initiated the patriarchal tradition of expecting single, virtuous women to staff the classrooms of the United States for little remuneration. The eighth chapter focuses on the increasing role of the federal government in providing "emergency" financial aid to the schools, especially the role of the Works Progress Administration. Chapter 9 reveals how the aborted New Deal economy caused school districts to undergo financial retrenchment. It also reviews parental concerns over curricula changes and describes black education during the 1930s. The final chapter describes a New York City school war that took place between school officials and politicians in 1939. Photographs, endnotes, and an index are included. The appendix contains statistical tables. (Contains 103 references.) (LMI)